

Artificial Enemies



Leo Strauss

Leo Strauss, (born September 20, 1899, Kirchhain, Germany—died October 18, 1973, Annapolis, Maryland, U.S.) was a German-Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, who immigrated to the United States. He was an influential political philosopher and interpreter of classical political theory.

Strauss served in the German army during World War I. After receiving a doctoral degree from the University of Hamburg (1921), he was a research assistant at the Academy for Jewish Research, Berlin (1925–32), and then worked as a Rockefeller fellow in England and France. He immigrated to the United States in 1938 (naturalized in 1944) and served as a professor of political science at the New School for Social Research (now The New School), New York City (1938–49), the University of Chicago (1949–68), Claremont (California) Men's College (1968–69), and St. John's College, Annapolis (1969–73).

The term Straussian is often used to categorize those associated with his thought. Notable students of Strauss included the philosopher and classicist [Allan Bloom](#) and the political scientists Thomas L. Pangle and Henry V. Jaffa. More controversially, Strauss was often depicted as an influential figure in neoconservative policy circles, notably in connection with U.S. foreign policy during the George W. Bush administration (2001–09). Connections between neoconservatism and Straussianism were drawn partly on the basis of the educational pedigree of some neoconservatives, such as [Paul Wolfowitz](#), and partly because both schools of thought viewed relativism as a threat to the survival of Western culture. This assessment was disputed, however, and it is clear that Strauss himself was more interested in the study of political philosophy—and in the pursuit of civic virtue associated with it—than with policy debates.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Leo-Strauss>

Noble lies and perpetual war: Leo Strauss, the neocons, and Iraq

What was initially an anti-war argument is now a matter of public record. It is widely recognized that the Bush administration was not honest about the reasons it gave for invading Iraq.

Paul Wolfowitz, the influential United States deputy secretary of defense, has acknowledged that the evidence used to justify the war was murky and now says that weapons of mass destruction weren't the crucial issue anyway (see the book by Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception: the uses of propaganda in Bush's war on Iraq*).

[Shadia Drury](#), professor of political theory at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, argues that the use of deception and manipulation in current US policy flow directly from the doctrines of the political philosopher Leo Strauss (1899-1973). His disciples include Paul Wolfowitz and other neo-conservatives who have driven much of the political agenda of the Bush administration.

The deep influence of Leo Strauss's ideas on the current architects of US foreign policy has been referred to, if sporadically, in the press (hence an insider witticism about the influence of 'Leo-cons').

Excerpts of interview of Shadia Drury by Danny Postel, October 2003:

Danny Postel: You've argued that there is an important connection between the teachings of Leo Strauss and the Bush administration's selling of the Iraq war. What is that connection?

Shadia Drury: Leo Strauss was a great believer in the efficacy and usefulness of lies in politics. Public support for the Iraq war rested on lies about Iraq posing an imminent threat to the United States the business about weapons of mass destruction and a fictitious alliance between al-Qaida and the Iraqi regime. Now that the lies have been exposed, Paul Wolfowitz and others in the war party are denying that these were the real reasons for the war.

So what *were* the real reasons? Reorganizing the balance of power in the Middle East in favor of Israel? Expanding American hegemony in the Arab world? Possibly. But these reasons would not have been sufficient in themselves to mobilize American support for the war. And the Straussian cabal in the administration realized that.

Danny Postel: The neo-conservative vision is commonly taken to be about spreading democracy and liberal values globally. And when Strauss is mentioned in the press, he is typically described as a great defender of liberal democracy against totalitarian tyranny. You've written, however, that Strauss had a 'profound antipathy to both liberalism and democracy.'

Shadia Drury: The idea that Strauss was a great defender of liberal democracy is laughable. I suppose that Strauss's disciples consider it a noble lie. Yet many in the media have been gullible enough to believe it.

[The BBC series *Power of nightmares* refers to such Noble lies as 'myth'.]

How could an admirer of Plato and Nietzsche be a liberal democrat? The ancient philosophers whom Strauss most cherished believed that the unwashed masses were not fit for either truth or liberty, and that giving them these sublime treasures would be like throwing pearls before swine. In contrast to modern political thinkers, the ancients denied that there is any natural right to liberty. Human beings

are born neither free nor equal. The natural human condition, they held, is not one of freedom, but of subordination, and in Strauss's estimation they were right in thinking so.

Praising the wisdom of the ancients and condemning the folly of the moderns was the whole point of Strauss's most famous book, *Natural Right and History*. The cover of the book sports the American Declaration of Independence. But the book is a celebration of nature, not the natural rights of man (as the appearance of the book would lead one to believe) but the natural order of domination and subordination.

... Leo Strauss repeatedly defends the political realism of Thrasymachus and Machiavelli (see, for example, his *Natural Right and History*, p. 106). This view of the world is clearly manifest in the foreign policy of the current administration in the United States.

... A second fundamental belief of Strauss's ancients has to do with their insistence on the need for secrecy and the necessity of lies. In his book *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Strauss outlines why secrecy is necessary. He argues that the wise must conceal their views for two reasons, to spare the people's feelings and to protect the elite from possible reprisals.

The people will not be happy to learn that there is only one natural right, the right of the superior to rule over the inferior, the master over the slave, the husband over the wife, and the wise few over the vulgar many. In *On Tyranny*, Strauss refers to this natural right as the 'tyrannical teaching' of his beloved ancients. It is tyrannical in the classic sense of rule above rule or in the absence of law (p. 70).

... The effect of Strauss's teaching is to convince his acolytes that they are the natural ruling elite and the persecuted few. And it does not take much intelligence for them to surmise that they are in a situation of great danger, especially in a world devoted to the modern ideas of equal rights and freedoms. Now more than ever, the wise few must proceed cautiously and with circumspection. So, they come to the conclusion that they have a moral justification to lie in order to avoid persecution. Strauss goes so far as to say that dissembling and deception, in effect, a culture of lies, is the peculiar justice of the wise.

... For Strauss, the rule of the wise is not about classic conservative values like order, stability, justice, or respect for authority. The rule of the wise is intended as an antidote to modernity. Modernity is the age in which the vulgar many have triumphed. It is the age in which they have come closest to having exactly what their hearts desire - wealth, pleasure, and endless entertainment. But in getting just what they desire, they have unwittingly been reduced to beasts. [Would the Trump administration qualify here?]

Nowhere is this state of affairs more advanced than in America. And the global reach of American culture threatens to trivialize life and turn it into entertainment. This was as terrifying a specter for Strauss as it was for Alexandre Kojève and Carl Schmitt.

All three of them were convinced that liberal economics would turn life into entertainment and destroy politics; all three understood politics as a conflict between mutually hostile groups willing to fight each other to the death. In short, they all thought that man's humanity depended on his willingness to rush naked into battle and headlong to his death. Only perpetual war can overturn the modern project, with its emphasis on self-preservation and 'creature comforts.' Life can be politicized once more, and man's humanity can be restored.

This terrifying vision fits perfectly well with the desire for honor and glory that the neo-conservative gentlemen covet. It also fits very well with the religious sensibilities of gentlemen. The combination of religion and nationalism is the elixir that Strauss advocates as the way to turn natural, relaxed, hedonistic men into devout nationalists willing to fight and die for their God and country.

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/article-1542jsp/>

"Jews", "Zionists", and "Neocons"

Although there was some crossover between Jews, Zionists, and Neocons in the Bush administration, they were not necessarily the same. While Jews and Zionists denote a religious orientation, Neocons subscribed to the political doctrines of PNAC, Project for a New American Century. Neoconservative and Zionist combined efforts cemented Muslim guilt for 9/11 and propelled Israel's foreign policy interests.

Many of the Top members of the Bush Administration had exceptionally close ties with the Israeli government. These include the former chairman of the pentagon's defense policy board, Richard Perle, deputy defense secretary Paul Wolfowitz, under Secretary of Defense Douglas feith, Edward luttwak of the National Security study group, Dov Zakheim, the financial officer on 9/ 11; Elliot Abrams of the National Security Council, and Press secretary Ari Fleischer.

Some have even worked on joint planning projects with Israeli Ministries. These relationships alone make Israel a subject worthy of discussion. These and many other Israeli connected experts formed the core group for a New American Century that had drafted plans for the invasion of Iraq long before 9/11. Ruppert p 254;

PNAC: *Project for a New American Century*



PNAC is an organization founded in the spring of 1997, evolving from Straussian philosophy as applied to American exceptionalism. The *Project for the New American Century* describes itself as "a non-profit, educational organization whose goal is to promote American global leadership. The Project is an initiative of the New Citizenship Project. William Kristol is chairman of the Project, and Robert Kagan, Devon Gaffney Cross, Bruce P. Jackson and John R. Bolton serve as directors. Gary Schmitt is executive director of the Project."

“As the 20th century draws to a close, the United States stands as the world’s most preeminent power. Having led the West to victory in the Cold War, America faces an opportunity and a challenge: Does the United States have the vision to build upon the achievement of past decades? Does the United States have the resolve to shape a new century favorable to American principles and interests?”

“[What we require is] a military that is strong and ready to meet both present and future challenges; a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad; and national leadership that accepts the United States’ global responsibilities.”

“Increasingly, the U.S. military has found itself undermanned, inadequately equipped and trained, straining to handle contingency operations, and ill-prepared to adapt itself to the revolution in military affairs. Without a well-conceived defense policy and an appropriate increase in defense spending, the United States has been letting its ability to take full advantage of the remarkable strategic opportunity at hand slip away.”

In broad terms, the project was seen as building upon the defense strategy outlined by the Cheney Defense Department in the waning days of the GHW Bush Administration. Defense specialists wrote papers to explore a variety of topics, which were shared with other PNAC enthusiasts. The final product of their labors was a report published in September 2000 titled “Rebuilding America’s Defenses”, in the early days of GW Bush’s first term in office. This report made recommendations to dramatically increase “effective” military spending to transform the US military into “tomorrow’s” dominant force.

The core missions for U.S. military forces, according to PNAC are: Defend the American homeland; Fight and decisively win multiple, simultaneous major theater wars; Perform the “constabulary” duties associated with shaping the security environment in critical regions; Transform U.S. forces to exploit the “revolution in military affairs”. Since this paper was written, the notion of “revolution in military affairs” has been criticized, to the point where even PNAC supporters doubt any such revolution exists.

https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/FP_20181217_defense_advances_pt1.pdf

“The process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event – like a new Pearl Harbor.”

<https://www.visibility911.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/02/rebuildingamericasdefenses.pdf>

Depending on the source, the list of named Neocons varies. The following table gives a concise list of some Neocons in the Bush Cheney administration.

Here Are the PNAC Members Embedded Within the Bush-Cheney Administration	
Many of these government officials are reported to have held dual Israeli-US citizenship during their tenure in Washington, DC.	
Dick Cheney	Vice President of the US
Donald Rumsfeld	Secretary of Defense
Paul Wolfowitz *	Deputy Secretary of Defense
Peter Rodman	Asst Secretary of Defense
Elliot Abrams *	National Security Council
Richard Armitage	Deputy Secretary of State (2001-2005)
Robert B. Zoellick *	Deputy Secretary of State (2005-2006)
Paula Dobriansky	Undersecretary of State Global Affairs
Richard Perle *	Defense Policy Board Advisory Comm.
Eliot A. Cohen *	Counselor to US State Dept
Douglas Feith *	Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby *	Chief of Staff for VP Cheney (former)
Dov Zakheim *	DoD Comptroller (missing \$2.3 trillion)
Bruce Jackson	President, US Committee on NATO
Randy Scheunemann	Advisor to Donald Rumsfeld on Iraq (US Committee on NATO)
John Bolton *	UN Ambassador
Zalmay Khalilzad	US Ambassador to Iraq
Seth Cropsey	Director Intl Broadcast Bureau (VOA)
Francis Fukuyama	President's Council on Bioethics
David Wurmser *	State Dept, special assistant to John Bolton
Michael Chertoff *	2nd Homeland Security Head, co-author of the PATRIOT Act
Philip Zelikow *	Head of the 9/11 Commission
Jeb Bush (not in administration, but a family advisor)	Governor of Florida and President George W. Bush's brother
* reported to be of dual-nationality, both Israeli and American.	

<http://www.newsfocus.org/pnac.htm>

See also:

<https://www.usahistorytimeline.com/pages/the-influence-of-neoconservatism-on-george-w-bush-s-foreign-policy-decisions-explained-f334e327.php>

“Imagining the transforming event”



PNAC was not the only focus on catastrophic terrorism. Something was definitely in the air. A 1998 CFR paper, “Catastrophic Terrorism: Tackling the New Danger” written by Ashton Carter, John Deutch, and Philip Zelikow touches on similar themes as the PNAC document “Rebuilding America’s Defenses”:

... catastrophic terrorism has moved from far-fetched horror to a contingency that could happen next month. Although United States will still take conventional terrorism seriously, as demonstrated by the response to the attacks on its embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, it is not yet prepared for the new threat of catastrophic terrorism....

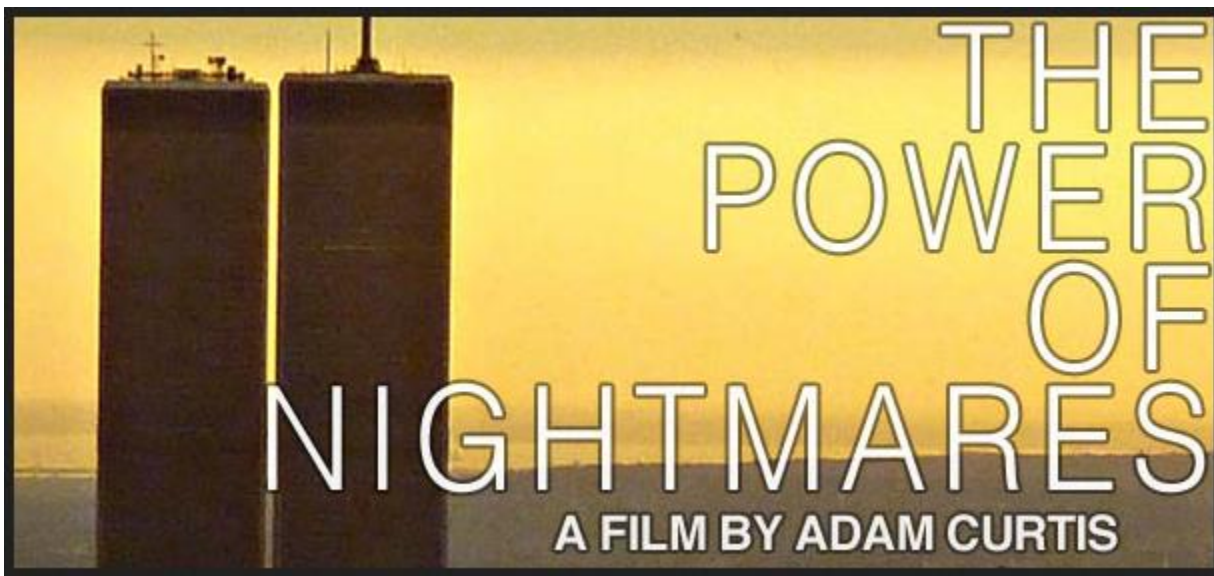
Elaborate international networks have developed among organized criminals drug traffickers, arms dealers and money launderers, creating an infrastructure for catastrophic terrorism around the world. ... Such an act of catastrophic terrorism would be a watershed event in American history. It could involve loss of life and property unprecedented in peacetime and undermine America's fundamental sense of security. Like Pearl Harbor this event would divide our past and future into a before and after.

https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/pantheon_files/files/publication/catastrophicterrorism-foreignaffairs-1198.pdf

This article is a distillation of the complete report of the Universities Study Group on Catastrophic Terrorism, published by Stanford University. A version of it will appear as a chapter in the forthcoming *Preventive Defense: An American Security Strategy for the 21st Century* by Ashton Carter and William Perry.

<https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/catastrophic-terrorism-tackling-new-danger>

Power of Nightmares



Power of Nightmares: The Rise of the Politics of Fear is a BBC television documentary series by Adam Curtis. It mainly consists of archive footage, with Curtis narrating. The series was originally

broadcast in the United Kingdom in 2004. The film summarizes the rise of the neoconservative movement in the United States and the radical Islamist movement. More controversially, it argues that radical Islamism as a massive, sinister organization, specifically in the form of al-Qaeda, is a myth, or noble lie, perpetrated by leaders of some countries— especially neoconservatives in the U.S. during the George W Bush administration after 9/11/2001.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLjVRVyRgpZFK5k1w19TSHh1TiLofkfCg7>

https://www.seattle911visibilityproject.in/911VP_2025_update/deepstate/notes-pofnm.pdf

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Power_of_Nightmares